

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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Handle Food Safely For Easter

The Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health Services is urging people to handle food safely this Easter. Easter is often a time when families gather for meals together and other festivities. Easter should be an enjoyable time, not marred by foodborne illness. We advise consumers to always cook food thoroughly, clean hands and surfaces, separate raw and cooked foods, and chill leftovers promptly. The following are tips for safe food handling practices during this holiday.

1. **Eggs** - Hard cooked eggs should be cooked thoroughly. Refrigerate eggs within 2 hours of cooking, keep refrigerated until consumed and use within a week.
2. **Dyeing and Hunting Eggs** - To dye hard-cooked eggs, use food-safe coloring and place them in the refrigerator within two hours for storage until used. Hard-cooked eggs for an egg hunt must be prepared with care to prevent cracking the shells. If the shells crack, bacteria could contaminate the inside. Eggs should be hidden in places that are protected from dirt, pets, and other sources of bacteria.

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The total time for hiding and hunting eggs should not be longer than 2 hours. The “found” eggs must be placed back into a refrigerator and stored until eaten. If the Easter egg hunt will take longer than 2 hours, hide plastic eggs instead.

3. **Beef and Lamb** - are often served at spring dinners. Roasts, steaks, and chops should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 145° F. Ground meats, on the other hand, should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 155° F.
4. **Ham** - Both vacuum-packaged fully cooked and canned hams can be eaten cold just as they come from their packaging. Reheat them to an internal temperature of 135°F. Cook-before-eating hams must be baked in an oven to a minimum internal temperature of 155°F to be safe for serving.
5. **Turkey or Chicken** - to defrost frozen poultry, place it in the refrigerator allowing one day for every 5 pounds. When roasting whole poultry, heat to a minimum internal temperature of 165° F as measured with a food thermometer. If stuffing whole poultry, make the dressing immediately before inserting it loosely in the cavity. The stuffing must also reach 165° F before removing the bird for the oven.
6. **Handling leftovers** - No perishable foods should stand at room temperature for more than two hours. Place leftovers in shallow containers, refrigerate, and use or freeze within 3 to 4 days. Thoroughly reheat leftovers to 165°F.